

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01511 211049Z
ACTION SS-25

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O 210945Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7185
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 1511

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, SY, LE, IS
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: MOVEMENT OF IRAQI TRUCK CONVOY

REF: STATE 071173

1. CALLED FONMIN BOUTROS 0915 HOURS LOCAL AND TOLD HIM WE HAD RECEIVED FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING IRAQI CONVOY OR CONVOYS THAT WE HAD DISCUSSED YESTERDAY. APPARENTLY ONE CONVOY ALREADY ARRIVED IN NABATIYAH. ISRAELIS VERY PERTURBED BY THIS AND IF THERE WERE ANY MORE I WAS CONVINCED ISRAELIS WOULD ATTACK AND THEN THERE WOULD BE ALL HELL TO PAY. I WAS UNDER INSTRUCTION ASK HIM TO RAISE THIS MATTER WITH SYRIAN. WE HAD ALREADY DONE SO OURSELVES BUT THOUGHT IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR SYRIANS TO PREVENT PASSAGE OF CONVOYS IF LEBANON HAD REQUESTED THEM TO DO SO.

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2. BOUTROS SAID PRIME MINISTER HOSS WAS ALREADY ENROUTE TO DAMASCUS AND THIS WAS AMONG SUBJECTS HE WAS GOING TO DISCUSS. HE AND BOUTROS HAD AGREED YESTERDAY THAT HE WOULD POINT OUT TO SYRIANS INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC LEBANESE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH REINFORCEMENTS. HE THOUGHT HOSS'S DEMARCHE PLUS OURS OF LAST NIGHT WOULD DO THE TRICK.

3. WOULD BE USEFUL FOR US TO HAVE CONSOLIDATED REPORT ON WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THESE CONVOYS. WE HAVE VARIOUS FRAGMENTS OF PUZZLE BUT I AM NOT SURE WE HAVE ENTIRE PICTURE. WOULD APPRECIATE RAPID SUMMARY FROM INR. WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE FROM TEL AVIV ISRAELI READOUT WITH AS MANY DETAILS AS POSSIBLE ON UNDERSTANDING WE WOULD PASS IT TO LEBANESE.

4. OUR OWN INFORMATION IS AS FOLLOWS:

A. A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT SAW 31 CIVILIAN TRUCKS WITH IRAQI LICENSE PLATES IN NABATIYAH YESTERDAY (MARCH 20) IN EARLY AFTERNOON.

B. ANOTHER CORRESPONDENT SAW A SMALL NUMBER OF MEN ALLEGED TO BE IRAQIS NEAR COASTAL ROAD SOUTH OF SIDON YESTERDAY.

C. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME ONE HUNDRED IRAQIS IN THAT AREA FOR MONTHS.

D. SHI'S DEPUTIES (ABDUL LATIF ZEIN AND KAZIM KHALIL) TOLD ME YESTERDAY THAT PREVIOUS DAY (MARCH 19) FOUR HUNDRED IRAQI VOLUNTEERS HAD BEEN STOPPED BY ADF AT GHAZIYAH, I.E., ON COAST ROAD BEFORE TURNING INLAND TO NABATIYAH. THIS
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FIGURE IS SUSPECT AND SHOULD PROBABLY BE DIVIDED BY IBN KHALDUN'S COEFFICIENT OF MENDACITY (10).

5. SECOND SERIES OF REPORTS, APPARENTLY UNRELATED TO FIRST, CONCERNS CONVOY OF IRAQI TANKS WHICH ALLEGED TO HAVE ENTERED LEBANON YESTERDAY. NUMBER VARIOUSLY ESTIMATED AT 20 TO 100. SOURCES FOR THIS HAVE BEEN CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND SON DANY. PALESTINIANS ALSO WERE REPORTED TO BE EXPECTING ARRIVAL OF SUCH A CONVOY, BUT WE ARE TOLD THEY NOW SAYING THAT IRAQIS CLAIM THEY TRIED SEND TANKS AND BATTALION SPECIAL FORCES TROOPS, BUT SYRIANS WOULD NOT LET THEM. IT SEEMS TO US THAT IF THERE IS INDEED SUCH A TANK CONVOY WANDERING AROUND SYRIA OR THE BEKAA, IT WOULD OR COULD BE SPOTTED BY SOMEONE RELIABLE. WE DO NOT PUT THE CHAMOUNS IN THAT CATEGORY, BUT YOU NEVER KNOW.
PARKER

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NNN

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